Social Identity and the Roots of Future Conflict

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Identity conflicts are, and will remain for decades to come, the most important source of international violence and war in the world. According to one count, there were 59 ongoing ethnic rebellions in the world in 1999.[1] Most of the key flash points around the world–Taiwan, Kashmir, Palestine, etc.–are unstable less because of the tangible interests the states have at stake than because the issues are articles of faith in the groups' nationalist ideologies. China, for example, has been willing to live for decades without *de facto* control over Taiwan, but has made clear that it would resort to war to prevent *de jure* Taiwanese independence. International terrorism, too, is motivated primarily by identity issues–Muslim fundamentalism and Palestinian nationalism most prominently, but also Pakistani irredentist nationalism in Kashmir, Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, and so on.

Since these conflicts are about identity–or, more precisely, groups' notions about their identity–understanding and tracking them requires a focus on the intangibles of group attitudes and organizations more than on "hard" information about military spending or economic trends. For the intelligence community, this requires more immersion in the cultures of target groups, more study of their media and even popular literature, and more polling and surveys. The key questions to answer in identifying long-term instability–identifying *where* identity conflict is likely to break out–are as follows. First, who is identified in each group's nationalist mythology as the national enemy, and how harsh is that presentation? Second, how severely under threat does the group perceive itself to be? Short-term factors making conflict more likely at a given time–identifying *when* identity conflict is likely to break out–include political instability, the emergence of extremist leaders, and economic downturns.

In this paper, I will do the following. First, I present a framework for analysis of identity conflict aimed at closing the gap between the policy community's intuitive understanding of the problem and the logic it uses for policy analysis and prescription, and offer some prescriptions for focusing intelligence collection and analysis to optimize the ability to forecast and track such conflicts. I then illustrate the application of this framework for understanding key identity conflicts in the Middle East–Islamist terrorism and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I conclude with a few tentative forecasts on the future of those conflicts.

Identity Conflict is Symbolic Politics

On no issue is the divide between political science and policy practice wider than on the notion that politics can be understood as "rational". Columnist Paul Krugman memorably published an article on election eve, 2002, headlined, "Stop Making Sense," urging readers to vote in spite of political science theories that assume voting to be irrational. And foreign policy

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[1] Ted Robert Gurr, "Ethnic Warfare on the Wane," *Foreign Affairs* vol. 29, no. 3 (May/June 2000), pp. 52-64. While Gurr's title claim may be correct, the waning of ethnic warfare is certain to be a slow, protracted process.

makers dealing with conflicts in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere repeat as a mantra the understanding that "these are not rational actors".

Yet when it comes to making foreign policy and analyzing policy outcomes, the policy community oddly adopts this very notion of rationality. Foreign statesmen are often urged to adopt the course seen as most rational from the U.S. standpoint, and the likely effectiveness of these policies is projected on the assumption that they will be implemented by rational legislatures and bureaucracies, and complied with by mass publics regardless of any potential cultural barriers. The result is peace proposals that either cannot be accepted or cannot be implemented, economic reform plans undone by corruption or mass opposition, and so on.

What is missing in these cases is the recognition that, especially in case of identity conflict, foreign politicians are often engaged in *symbolic politics*–i.e., in using symbols to manipulate the emotions of their audiences for their own political purposes, rather than in promoting any national interest. The logic of symbolic politics is as follows:

- Ethnic, national or religious identities are built on myths that define who is a group member, what it means to be a group member, and, typically, who the group's enemies are. These myths are usually based on truth but are selective or exaggerated in their presentation of history.[2] Their role is to specify, for example, that French and Spaniards, though they share the same religion, are different nations because of their different languages; while Serbs and Croats, sharing a language, are different nations because of their different religions.

- These mythologies give rise to emotionally-laden symbols that politicians can use to gain support and rouse their followers' feelings–for example, Milosevic's 1989 visit to Kosovo Field,[3] Israeli politicians' references to the Holocaust, or Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed's recent anti-Semitic remarks to the OIC conference.

- Ingroup-outgroup psychology typically leads people to see competition with other groups as competitions for esteem or status, so groups often feel emotionally that the other group's gain is automatically their own loss, and vice versa. Emotion-laden status competition also leads to exaggerated threat perceptions, so groups are likely to see threats in all-or-nothing terms as threatening the existence of their group.[4]

Understanding *where* identity conflict is likely to arise or continue therefore requires understanding where group myths and fears are especially powerful, and especially hostile to some other group. For example, the vicious racist ideology propounded in Rwanda for three decades by Hutu governments was the necessary precondition for making the 1994 genocide possible. Hutu fears of Tutsis were intensified in the early 1990s by the invasion of Rwanda by

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[2] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

[3] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[4] Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1985).

the Tutsi-led Rwandese Popular Front (RPF), and by the coup and massacre of Hutu by Tutsis in next-door Burundi in 1993. These myths and fears together enabled extremist elites inside and outside government–including but not only in the media–to put genocide on the Rwandan agenda in 1993-94 by evoking the myth of past Tutsi domination and branding the RPF rebels and all Tutsi as "cockroaches" who needed to be exterminated. Rwanda's economic crisis of the time, and international pressure on its government to liberalize, added to the crisis atmosphere and gave its threatened elites incentives to take drastic action.[5]

To generalize from this illustration:

• The long-term indicator that identity violence is likely is nationalist (or religious) myths justifying hostility against another group. These myths are easily discernable in the national media, school curricula, official government documents and speeches, popular literature and history, etc. The more hostile the myths or ideology, the more likely violence is to occur, and the more severe it is likely to be.

• The medium-term indicators suggesting increased likelihood of identity-driven violence in a state are evidence of fears of group extinction, economic crisis, and a political transition that creates the opportunity for extremists to mobilize.

• The short-term indicator that identity-driven violence may be imminent is the emergence of extremist elites who successfully mobilize support by playing on emotionally-laden hostile myths and stoking ethnic fears in pursuit of political support for themselves.

The Puzzle of Islamist Terrorism

Why have extremist Islamist groups launched a campaign of terrorism against the United States, while other groups with grievances against the U.S. have not? U.S. influence in Latin America is even more pervasive and longstanding than it is in the Middle East, yielding numerous complaints about U.S. policy stalling Latin economic progress and infringing political autonomy. U.S. policy toward Saudi Arabia and Egypt has not been notably less friendly than its policy toward Mexico and Venezuela–including longstanding support for corrupt and repressive regimes–yet it is the former two countries that produced virtually all of the September 11 attackers, while the latter have not produced any significant violence against the U.S. Why?

Indeed, the question can be expanded: why are Islamist groups so disproportionately responsible for terrorism worldwide? Samuel Huntington was heavily criticized for writing about "Islam's bloody borders" in his writings, but his evidence shows that Muslim countries and groups are more likely to engage in violent conflict than members of other groups.[6] The same is true of international terrorism: in 1998, for example, the majority of the 741 people

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[5] See Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

[6] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp. 254-58.

killed in international terrorist incidents, according to the U.S. Department of State, were killed by Islamist groups–primarily by al Qaeda in the bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, but also by Islamist groups in India, Islamist Kashmiri separatists, and Islamist groups in Uganda.[7] While there are other violent terrorist groups–the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, non-Muslim groups in India, and (until recently) UNITA in Africa produced particularly large body counts–the fact remains that in recent years, most of the killing has been done by Islamists. In the last year or two, beside 9/11, the suicide bombings in Israel and attacks in India by Kashmiri Islamists would likely account for most of the terrorist body count. The "War on Terrorism" is, therefore, appropriately focused on groups motivated by extreme interpretations of Islam. But why are there so many such groups, and such violent ones?

One explanation, commonly propounded in both Europe and the Middle East itself, is that these terrorist campaigns represent understandable reactions against highly objectionable U.S. and Israeli policies, especially the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the economic sanctions on Iraq. Yet again, however, this argument begs the question: why do these particular policies provoke so violent a reaction? U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba, for example, are more harmful and less justifiable than U.N. sanctions against Iraq, yet they provoke no violent response. Similarly, Turkey has much less national security justification for its occupation of northern Cyprus, and Syria less justification for its occupation of Lebanon, than Israel does for occupying the West Bank; yet again, the international outcry on these issues is muted and there is no terrorist response.

The symbolic politics of identity conflict in the Middle East

Both the puzzle of Islamist terrorism and the intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are best understood through the prism of symbolic politics, and in particular, though a focus on the group myths and fears that motivate group action. The Israeli nationalist narrative emphasizes the necessity of a state of Israel as a refuge for world Jewry after the mortal threat of the Holocaust, and portrays the Arabs as relentless and ruthless opponents of Israel's existence. The Palestinian narrative in parallel fashion places the Catastrophe of 1948 at the center of the national identity, casting Israelis as the people who unjustly inflicted that national catastrophe, who remain the major obstacle to Palestinian statehood, and who continue to threaten the very existence of the Palestinian nation. Both groups see themselves as the aggrieved victim threatened with obliteration, both require security guarantees the other is unable or unwilling to grant, and so the result is a security dilemma in which each side's "self-defense" harms and threatens the other.

Some specialists on Islam, most notably Bernard Lewis and Malise Ruthven, have proposed a closely parallel account of the motivation for Islamic fundamentalism and the anti-American terrorism it has spawned.[8] This argument focuses on the competition over group

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[7] U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1999).

[8] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage". *The Atlantic* vol. 266, no. 3 (September 1990),

status, more specifically on a particular aspect of wounded Muslim pride which psychologists might call status inconsistency. Islamists are aware that they are heirs to a great and advanced civilization, which was generating advances in science and literature while Europe was sunk in the Dark Ages, and that indeed remained superior to Western achievement for a thousand years. Some strands of Sunni thought, in what Ruthven calls the "argument from manifest success," argue that this past glory demonstrates the superiority of Islamic over western civilization. But if material success is the criterion, such thinkers cannot explain away the obvious western material superiority of the last few centuries.

The result, Lewis and Ruthven argue, is a mixture of hate and resentment aimed against the West–and particularly against the U.S., the current leader of the West–for posing this challenge to the axiomatically believed Islamic superiority: if you cannot surpass the West, the thinking goes, destroy it. Lewis emphasizes the irrationality of this impulse, pointing out that in 1979, a mob in Islamabad attacked U.S. government offices in response to violence by Iranian pilgrims and Saudi authorities in the Grand Mosque in Mecca–an event that had no connection at all to the U.S. Ruthven suggests that this logic helps explain why Muslims with advanced technical training, such as Osama bin Laden and Mohammed Atta, may be attracted to extremist Islamic thought. It is such technical experts who are confronted with the logical inconsistency in its starkest form: the obvious value of western technical achievements, on which they are dependent for their livelihoods, versus the unacceptability of the western values. This includes a fundamental contradiction of epistemologies: Cartesian doubt as the basis of scientific advance, as opposed to theological certitude of the eternal truth of the Koran.

A second fundamental cultural clash involves social mores, especially those related to sexuality and the status of women. The West represents liberated attitudes toward sexuality and female equality, values strongly displayed in exported cultural products such as film and television. Religious fundamentalists see such cultural exports as a sort of spiritual pollution. What Lewis and Ruthven emphasize is the fundamental importance of this challenge to ordinary Muslims. Lewis writes that for many an ordinary Muslim, "the last straw was the challenge to his mastery in his own house, from emancipated women and rebellious children. It was too much to endure, and the outbreak of rage against these alien, infidel and incomprehensible forces that had . . . disrupted his society, and finally violated the sanctuary of his home was inevitable."[9] In other words, the fundamental sources of many Muslim men's self-esteem–not only their group pride as Muslims, but also their honor as individual men–is threatened by the values of sexual liberation embodied in Western cultural products.

Ruthven focuses also on attitudes toward sexuality itself. The trouble, he suggests, stems from the incompatibility between the sexual titillation spread by western culture, and the unavailability– indeed, unacceptability–of any legitimate sexual gratification for unmarried young men. The result, he argues, is a disproportionate Puritanical effort to clamp down on sexual expression as a reaction against western cultural power. A 1981 Iranian law codifying

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pp. 47-60; Malise Ruthven, *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America.* (London: Granta, 2002).

[9] Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," p. 49.

Islamic law, for example, focused 107 out of its 195 provisions on regulating sexual conduct. Some of the young men who have the most difficulty handling this sexual tension, Ruthven argues, turn their frustration outward against the forces that put them in such an untenable situation–the West, and especially the U.S.–through violent means if necessary.

A third point Ruthven makes is that extreme Islamist ideology has not only some plausibility and appeal to many Muslims, but also a powerful institutional base in the Saudi regime, which has been assiduously promoting and exporting this ideology for decades. There should be no mistake about what this ideology says; one Saudi-funded publication puts it this way: "The unbelievers, idolaters and others like them must be hated and despised . . . [The] Qur'an [forbids] taking Jews and Christians as friends, and that applies to every Jew and every Christian".[10] According to one study, most publishing houses in Cairo and Beirut are subsidized by fundamentalist Wahhabi organizations which block their publication of moderate Sufi works and promote publication of extreme Islamist messages in the West, so that, according to one (possibly exaggerated) estimate, 80% of mosques in the U.S. are "under the control of Wahhabi imams who preach extremism".[11] Of course, the U.S. also played a role in promoting these views, as CIA funding for the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan was channeled through the Pakistani ISI overwhelmingly to extreme Islamist groups rather than more moderate or traditional resistance groups. The point, however, is the same: that the extremist ideology that feeds anti-Western terrorism is widespread not only because it is popular, but because it is propagandized by the powerful. These are the sources of the myths justifying hostility to the West.

The same can be said for anti-Israeli sentiment which, in much of the Muslim world, is by now a pervasive ideology of anti-Semitism that repeats most of the themes of Nazi propaganda: this anti-Semitism, too, is institutionalized in government-run media and statements by government officials across the Middle East. The Iranian leader, the Ayatollah Khamenei, in spring 2001 referred to the Israeli government this way: "the Zionist regime, as the symbol of bloodthirstiness [and] barbarianism," and to its leaders as "wild beasts". Lest the point be missed, in another remark he referred to Israel as a "cancerous tumor" that had to be removed.[12] An article in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Akhbar* around the same time wrote of the "fraud of the Holocaust", addressing Hitler by saying, "if only you had done it, brother" because Jews are the "accursed ones", the "virus of the generation".[13] In a sermon broadcast on Saudi TV1 in 2002, a Saudi mullah drew the logical conclusion in this prayer: "Oh God, destroy the usurper, tyrant

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[10] Cal Thomas, *Lexington Herald-Leader*, September 18, 2002; cf. Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003).

[11] Quoted in Ruthven, *A Fury for God*, p. 177.

[12] "Khamenei's Response to Israeli-Palestinian Fighting". Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch no. 365, April 10, accessed at www.memri.org.

[13] "Columnist for Egyptian Government Daily to Hitler:'If Only You Had Done It, Brother'". Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch no. 375, May 3.

Jews . . . O God, help the mujahidin score victory and elevate the world of Islam".[14] No clearer statement is possible of how the quest for group status motivates extremist violence.

The ultimate statement of anti-Semitism is, of course, the blood libel, the claim that Jews murder non-Jewish children for ritual purposes, to use their blood in some ritual food. This libel, too, is not uncommon in Arab discourse. The incumbent Defense Minister of Syria, Mustafa Tlass, published a book called "the Matzoh of Zion" in the 1980s–republished in two editions–repeating this venerable slander.[15] The main Egyptian pro-government daily *al-Ahram* repeated the same charge three years ago,[16] and when it was criticized, the Palestinian Authority daily *al-Hayat al-Jadida* defended it, insisting that the claim of ritual murder referred to a "true event". The Saudi daily *al-Riyadh* published a different version of the slander this spring, claiming that "Jewish people must obtain human blood" to make pastries for the holiday of Purim.[17]

Let me be explicit about what I am trying to say here. I do **not** believe that there is a necessary and inherent clash of civilizations between the West, or the U.S., and the Muslim world. What I am saying–or, more precisely, agreeing with Bernard Lewis and Malise Ruthven about–is that there exists in the Muslim world, especially west of the Indus, an extremist ideology that rejects the habits of mind that make Western science and technology possible, thereby entrenching Arab and Muslim technological backwardness while simultaneously blaming that backwardness on the infidel West, which is also portrayed as the Satanic destroyer of Muslim culture. The ideology suggests that improving the status of the Muslim world requires attacking the West in one way or another. That ideology also includes a vicious anti-Semitism that literally demonizes Jews, sometimes substituting the term "zionists" but using it as synonymous with Jews. This anti-Semitism explicitly calls for the destruction of the state of Israel and either the expulsion or the annihilation of its population. Furthermore, this ideology is explicitly promoted by high-ranking Arab and Iranian officials as well as by the propaganda apparatus of many states in the region.

The implication of this analysis is that while certain Western or U.S. policies might be considered relatively more provocative to Muslim sensibilities than other policies, no policy that protects western interests, western culture, or the existence of the state of Israel will be satisfactory to extremist Islamist ideologues, including some in prominent Saudi institutions. So while it might be true that certain U.S. policies helped to provoke the violent reaction that led to the mass murder of 9/11, it is also true that Middle Eastern Muslims are particularly easy to provoke. It is worth keeping in mind that the policy said to have most strongly motivated Osama

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[14] Thomas, *Lexington Herald-Leader,* September 18, 2002.

[15] "The Damascus Blood Libel (1840) as Told by Syria's Minister of Defense, Mustafa Tlass". Middle East Media Research Institute Inquiry and Analysis Series no. 99, June 27.

[16] "Leading Egyptian Newspaper raises Blood Libel". Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch no. 150, November 6, accessed at www.memri.org.

[17] "Saudi Government Daily: Jews Use Teenagers' Blood for 'Purim' Pastries". Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch no. 354, March 15, accessed at www.memri.org.

bin Laden was the U.S. deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia–who are there to protect Saudi Arabia against a regime, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, that bin Laden despises very nearly as much as he despises the U.S. In what sense did that "provoke" a campaign of terror?

I believe that the best frame of reference for understanding the politics generated by such beliefs–and what needs to be done in response–is neither the old-style *realpolitik* pursued by the current Bush Administration nor the liberal reliance on international institutions promoted by many in Europe. Rather, we need to focus on the conflict of cultural beliefs and on the way politicians use myths and symbols to gain support for themselves and their policies.

How and why the symbols are used is abundantly clear, and is often noted by journalists. When leaders cannot or will not serve the material interests of their populations by providing economic growth and improved standards of living, they try to garner support by manipulating symbols as a way of appealing to popular emotions. The easiest way to do this is to blame foreign or domestic scapegoats–the West and Israel–for the country's problems. It was, therefore, in the interests of the rulers of all Arab countries to allow these anti-Western, anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic ideologies to be expounded even as many of them followed foreign policies of accommodation with the west and with Israel. Something like this has been the ruling strategy of the al-Saud family for decades: in exchange for political quiescence from the population, the regime offered a small share of the country's oil wealth and self-esteem through the rigid Wahhabi orthodoxy that cast all infidels and most other Muslims as inferior.

This ruling strategy is, however, starting to unravel due to the combined effects of the new Palestinian *intifadah*, the *al-Jazeera* television network, and the American "war on terrorism". For the first time, Arab governments are finding that anti-Zionism is not a pacifier but an expander of popular unrest, as their populations see the violence of the *intifadah* on television every day and are provoked to anger. Therefore the very same Saudi regime that worked to block any Palestinian-Israeli agreement in 2000 by denouncing any compromise on Jerusalem abruptly reversed course and proposed a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace once it began to feel the political pressure generated by coverage of the *intifadah.* At the same time, the 9/11 attacks ended American patience with the hypocrisy of so-called "moderate" Arab regimes, demanding clear help and cooperation in the war on the terrorists nourished for decades by these very regimes' anti-Western propaganda. This presents a crisis for these regimes, as their past ruling strategy has become unworkable.

The Symbolic Politics of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In understanding the symbolic politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the starting point is the symbolism of the Holocaust. Arab anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and explicit calls for the destruction of Israel inevitably raise existential fears among the Israeli population; in such a context, the Israeli concessions necessary for peace are politically impossible. More to the point, these same violent themes are common not just in Arab discourse generally, but in official Palestinian discourse–and they were common even in the heyday of the Oslo process. For example, at the time of the September 1996 mini-uprising over the Israeli opening of a tunnel in Jerusalem, Arafat proclaimed of his supporters: "They will fight for Allah, they will kill and be

killed, and this is a solemn oath". A year earlier, Arafat remarked on the radio, "The struggle will continue until all of Palestine is liberated"–a direct statement of the aim of destroying Israel. His justice minister said around the same time, "We must remember that the main enemy of the Palestinian people, now and forever, is Israel".[18] Such statements, combined with the failure of the PLO ever to produce an amended charter without calls for the destruction of Israel, make a mockery of the Oslo renunciation of violence and acceptance of Israel's existence.

If Palestinian symbolic politics involves demands for Israel's destruction, Israeli symbolic politics contains a broad streak of Biblically-based claims to sovereignty over all of Jerusalem and the West Bank and, in its most extreme form, calls for the expulsion of the Palestinians. It is this politics of religious symbolism that fueled the continuing policy of settlements that make a mockery of implied Israeli promises to exchange land for peace. In short, symbolic politics led both sides to renege on their Oslo commitments. It is this bad faith on both sides–the failure of both sides to confront their symbolically powerful hard-line factions–more than any tactical error that led to the collapse of the Oslo process.

Toward a projection: The future of identity conflict

A solidly-based projection about the future of identity conflict, in the Middle East or elsewhere, would require enormously more data than is currently available about the currency of hostile myths and symbols among the populations in question. The considerations below are therefore only rough guesses based on incomplete information. That information suggests:

- In spite of the practical failure of political Islam in Iran, Sudan, and elsewhere, Islamist myths and symbols will remain a potent tool for mobilizing public support throughout the Muslim world for decades to come. This means that regardless of the medium-term degree of success in the U.S. campaign against al-Qaeda, extreme anti-American movements, including violent ones, will continue to crop up in the Muslim world.

- Against this backdrop, future regime transitions in Muslim countries (e.g., in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and post-occupation Iraq) will produce new governments that are skilled at manipulating Islamist rhetoric. While some might follow the Mahathir formula-occasional extremist rhetoric masking fundamentally moderate policies–it is likely that at least some of these states will experience new-generation Islamist revolutions in the coming decades.

- While the level of fear felt by different societies can vary over time, the U.S. and the Muslim world are currently locked in a security dilemma in which U.S. efforts to improve its security against terrorism threaten a range of Muslim values, from national sovereignty and autonomy to economic development and cultural values. The remonstrances of Muslim moderates–e.g., for trade concessions–are likely to remain ineffective, fueling the frustrations and fears that will motivate the next generation of

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[18] Jonathan Torop, "Arafat and the uses of terror". *Commentary* vol. 103, no. 5 (May 1997), pp. 30-33.

Islamist terrorists. That will, in turn, likely continue to spark violent American reactions.

- Though the basic themes of Islamist discourse are similar from Morocco to Malaysia, Muslim unity would require a nearly unimaginable change in the institutional structure of politics across that region; the opportunity for any group of extremists to mobilize the whole Muslim world therefore will not arise. Indeed, even within particular nations, different strands of thinking (sectarian, ethnic and other) will continue to divide people, simultaneously keeping conflict going (including, most likely, between Palestinians and Israelis) and preventing massive escalation.

- The same theme of ethnic division rather than civilizational conflict will characterize identity conflict in other developing areas, especially sub-Saharan Africa. Emergence of new failed states will create useful vacuums into which terrorist organizations can move.

My main point, however, concerns intelligence collection. The above projections are *guesses* based on fragmentary evidence. The U.S. intelligence community has the resources to do better, but only if it substantially increases the attention paid to the power of the political myths that are the fundamental organizing weapon of Islamist and ethnic extremists.